**United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service** 

## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only received

date entered

	-complete applical	ole sections			
1. Nam	ie				
historic <sub>V</sub>	lilkens-Robins	Building	*		
and/or common	Robins Paper	Building	80		
2. Loca	ation				
street & number	314 308-312 W. P	ratt Street		not for public	ation
city, town	Baltimore	vicinity of	congressional district	Third	
state	Maryland	code 24 county	Baltimore (	City code	510
3. Clas	sification				
Category  district X building(s) structure site object	Ownership _X_ public private both Public Acquisition in process being considere	yes: restricted	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park private re religious scientific transport	
4. Own	er of Prop	erty			
name Ma	yor and City	Council			
street & number	City Hall,	100 Holliday Stree	et		
city, town	Baltimore	vicinity of	state	Maryland	21202
5. Loca	ation of Le	gal Descripti	on		
courthouse, regis	stry of deeds, etc.	Records Office,	Room 601		
street & number		Baltimore City (	Courthouse		
city, town		Baltimore	state	Maryland	2120
6. Repr	esentatio	n in Existing	Surveys	•	
itle		has this pro	pperty been determined el	egible? yes	no
date			federal star	te county	local
depository for su	rvey records				

### 7. Description

B-3598

Co	ndition
	_ excellent
X	_ good

\_\_\_ deteriorated \_\_\_ ruins unexposed Check one
X original site
moved d

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Check one

\_\_\_ altered

X unaltered

The Wilkens-Robins Building at 308-314 W. Pratt Street is a five-story six-bay structure of common bond construction with a cast-iron front. It is approximately eighty feet tall, fifty feet wide and one hundred and ten feet deep and has a gently sloping roof. Stylistically its facade contains design elements of the North Italian Renaissance Revival including arched openings framed between columns and full entablatures for each story. Derived from the Roman Coliseum and from the architecture of Sansovino, it presents these elements in ornate form following the tradition of R.G. Hatfield's famous iron building for the Baltimore Sun. A sculptured surface of rich relief, a dignified symmetry of parts and an expanse of over-sized windows are the highlights of one of the few surviving cast-iron facades in Baltimore.

The first story, still intact with a temporary infill of concrete block, has its original six entry bays. These are surmounted by transoms under flat arches and fronted by an arcade consisting of fluted iron columns and pilasters at center and at each side. Tuscan bases, bell capitals and composite abacuses with egg and dart molding embellish the slender columns. The entablature is dentilated and features a broad band of cabling on the projecting cornice. The extant molded iron jambs encased the original two-paneled, glazed doubledoors that have been modified in recent years. Rectangular projections finalize each side of the first story cornice as well as those of the upper stories.

The second through the fifth stories of the facade are also arcaded, providing space for twenty-four large arched, recessed windows--one of the design advantages of cast-iron construction. Early views of the building reveal that the original two-over-two lights were replaced by four-over-four. All are presently boarded, but the sash remain in place.

The arches of the upper floors are semi-circular and the openings shorter than those of the first story. Originally the column capitals held ornate leaf decorations, but in the early 1950s the building was repainted and stripped of these details. The soffits of these arches are coffered and their spandrels are recessed. Molded jambs also enrich the glazed arcaded surface. Small, cabled cornices protrude and divide the upper stories.

Seven leaf-decorated brackets support the boxed dentilated roof cornice. The frieze is defined by a thick rope molding over the arcade of the fifth story and running the width of the building. A thumb-nail sketch used by Wilkens for promotional purposes indicates that additional molding was attached to the facade in its early history. Unusual quoins, representing alternating pieces of dressed and rough-hewn stone, define the sides of the facade. The degree of ornamentation found in this facade is relatively rare in cast-iron structures, and the leaf-decorated cornice brackets with rope molding are found on only two buildings in New York, a city with a rich cast-iron legacy.

FHR-8-300A (11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

# IONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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PAGE 1

Wilkens-Robins Building Baltimore City

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland

ITEM NUMBER 7

(DESCRIPTION, continued)

The west side of the building is a continuous brick expanse with fourteen windows and two entrances. Small windows, sealed with cement block, are placed in the first two bays of the first story. Two transomed doorways are to the left. A central entrance features an iron lintel while the one closest to the rear has brick jambs and lintels and a sliding freight door. The windows of the upper stories are irregularly placed and constructed. The bay above the center door has four stories of single windows with stone sills and flat-arched brick lintels while smaller windows with splayed brick lintels are scattered randomly. Many have metal-covered fire shutters. A shadow line of new brick marks the fifth story addition.

The rear of the building is eighteen bays wide and appears to stand six stories high because of a mezzanine level between the first and second floors. The two rear entrances at the center and the western corner e sealed. Three of the small windows are sealed and three are shuttered. The upper story windows have stone sills and iron lintels and most are fire shuttered. The east side of the building is similar to the other two sides.

Between the brick side-bearing walls, the interior is divided into two nearly equal spaces. The east side contains a partitioned office at the front and was apparently used mostly for office space and showroom display. The west side was used for stock storage and contains an intermediate support system of eight timber posts and a timber sill on each level but the fifth. A large opening with a sliding freight door connects the two halves at the center of each level. A staircase at the front of each section provides access to the upper floors. Stairs at the rear of the western half lead to the basement and the mezzanine level and retain some of their original details.

The rear of the second level is elevated to provide space for the mezzanine below. In the western portion holes in the floor reveal alternating heavy and light joists designed to carry heavier loads than in the eastern half of the building.

The third floor houses the machinery for the elevator on the east side of the building. The floor system on this level consists of 3/4 inch joists on 12 inch centers. As on the other levels these are covered by heavy tongue and groove wooden flooring. The fourth floor nstruction matches the design elements of the lower levels.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #2.

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Wilkens-Robins Building Baltimore City

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE 2

DATE ENTERED.

(DESCRIPTION, continued)

The fifth floor is similar to the lower levels but the sloping roof creates a smaller space at the rear. Skylights, presently sealed, pierce the roof in the western half which also houses the machinery for the other elevator. The irregular buttressing system of the west wall is also particularly visible on this level where piers of uneven wide protrude slightly into the room. This floor is in most nearly original condition.

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agricultureX architecture art _X commerce communications	community planning conservation economics education engineering exploration/settlement	Iandscape architectur Iaw Iiterature Indicate military Indicate philosophy Indicate politics/government	e religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1871	Builder/Architect		

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### SIGNIFICANCE

The Wilkens-Robins Building is one of the few remaining cast-iron fronted buildings in the city of Baltimore and an excellent example of a technology of building in transition. By the 1870s the city had become an important center of cast-iron construction and several important foundries exported such architectureal fronts across the country and around the world. Many were used int he expansion of the central business district here after the Civil War. The majority were destroyed by the Fire of 1904 which devastated the area east of Howard Street and the remaining ones have gradually been torn down. This building is also a fine illustration of the way in which formal aesthetic principles were translated into what was the world's first industrialized, factory-produced building material.

#### HISTORY

The Wilkens-Robins Building was built in 1871 as the office and warehouse of the Wilkens Brush Company, a pioneer of large-scale industrial production in Baltimore. In the 1840s, William Wilkens, a German immigrant who had probably learned the trade of brushmaking in his native land, founded the company. The plant expanded and was forced to move from earlier locations, first on the Jones Falls at Lexington and then on Frederick Avenue. The company used hair from the hides of the slaughterhouse for its brushes and was probably a very smelly operation. Like the slaughterhouses themselves Wilkens was forced to relocate in a less populated area as the scale of his operation increased. In 1847 he bought land in west Baltimore and began to build a large integrated manufacturing facility. By 1870 the factory contained specialized machinery for making haircloth and wigs as well as brushes. Ten years later it included a blacksmith shop, brickyard and machine and Wilkens had over 800 employees, a large number for that day.

Wilkens diversified his production to take advantage of scraps that were by-products of brushmaking. Skilled weavers wove the longer horsehair into haircloth, an incredible durable material used to cover upholstered furniture. Shorter horsehair was combined with cattle hair and used to make "curled hair", a stuffing for furniture, mattresses and cushions. Some was also twisted into rope and set with steam to form ladies hairpieces and wigs. Sort, stiff hog bristles were used to make brushes of all sorts. Wilkens had agents who scoured the country and went abroad to find suitable hair and to market his products. Location in a port city like Baltimore with its transportation connections both to the agricultural west and abroad was a definite advantage for an operation of this scale.

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# IONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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Wilkens-Robins Building Baltimore City

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland

ITEM NUMBER

B PAGE 3

(SIGNIFICANCE, continued)

Construction of the Pratt Street facility marked a new stage in the company's development. Industrial production could only be sustained by comparable marketing and financial methods. In other words, Wilkens probably needed a base of operations near the banks, shipping agents and insurance companies in the central business district.

The building itself reflected the type of organization that characterized his factory. It was fronted with a cast-iron facade, the world's first industrialized building material. By the 1850s cast-iron fronts and entire cast-iron buildings were being pre-fabricated in Baltimore factories and shipped to worldwide markets just like Wilkens' brushes. The city had a number of foundries whose designers and mold-makers imitated the most elaborate classical and Victorian architecture. Bartlett-Hayward, which probably produced the Wilkens front in its Scott Street shop, was one of the leading foundries in the puntry in 1870. Their shop employed crews of trained artists, wood carvers, pattern-makers and molders capable of producing almost any design--in multiples! Each group performed a specialized task and all were orchestrated to produce high-quality castings at a price within the reach of a relatively large market.

The building's structure also summarizes the impact of industrialization on the rise of the city's central business district following
the Civil War. The majority of the building is of brick masonry and
timber construction, linking it to an older tradition of warehouse
construction. The use of cast-iron, however, was intended to convey the
notion of progress. The two notions of tradition and change symbolize
the tensions and the vitality of the late 19th century and reflect the
emergence of the modern city.

The building's construction history also marks the beginning of Baltimore's high-rise skyline, a phenomenon due largely to the advent of the elevator. Elijah Otis demonstrated his safety device at the 1853 World Exposition in New York and set architecture on its upward course. Vertical possibilities were slowly realized, but by the 1880s the skyscraper had make its appearance and many small buildings were added to. The Wilkens-Robins Building was only four stories high originally, but sometime in the 1880s, a fifth story was added. The foundry was asked to provide an identical section of facade and the masonry walls were raised. A comparision of the buildings present appearance with an old view f the original structure shows a striking contrast between the two. The old feeling of solidity derived from the use of a classical design

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### N. MONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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Wilkens-Robins Building Baltimore City CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland

ITEM NUMBER

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(SIGNIFICANCE, continued)

has given away to a sense of vertical linearity. This desire for a taller building is not only functional but captures both the organization and the elan of late 19th century industrialists and city builders.

By 1910 the importance of a downtown location was diminished for companies like Wilkens and the Pratt Street office was replaced by a new headquarters at the plant. By this time most of their sales were probably wholesale and the telephone and the motor truck allowed them to conduct business effectively from a distance. While the company retained ownership of the building until 1929, it was occupied by a variety of tenants, most of whom were paper companies. During the 20s it was the home of the Bradley-Reese Paper Company and was finally purchased by the Robins Paper Company in 1940. Its long and useful history have made it s landmark to Baltimoreans and to visitors arriving nearby Camden Station.

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Wilkens-Robins Building Baltimore City

Maryland CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

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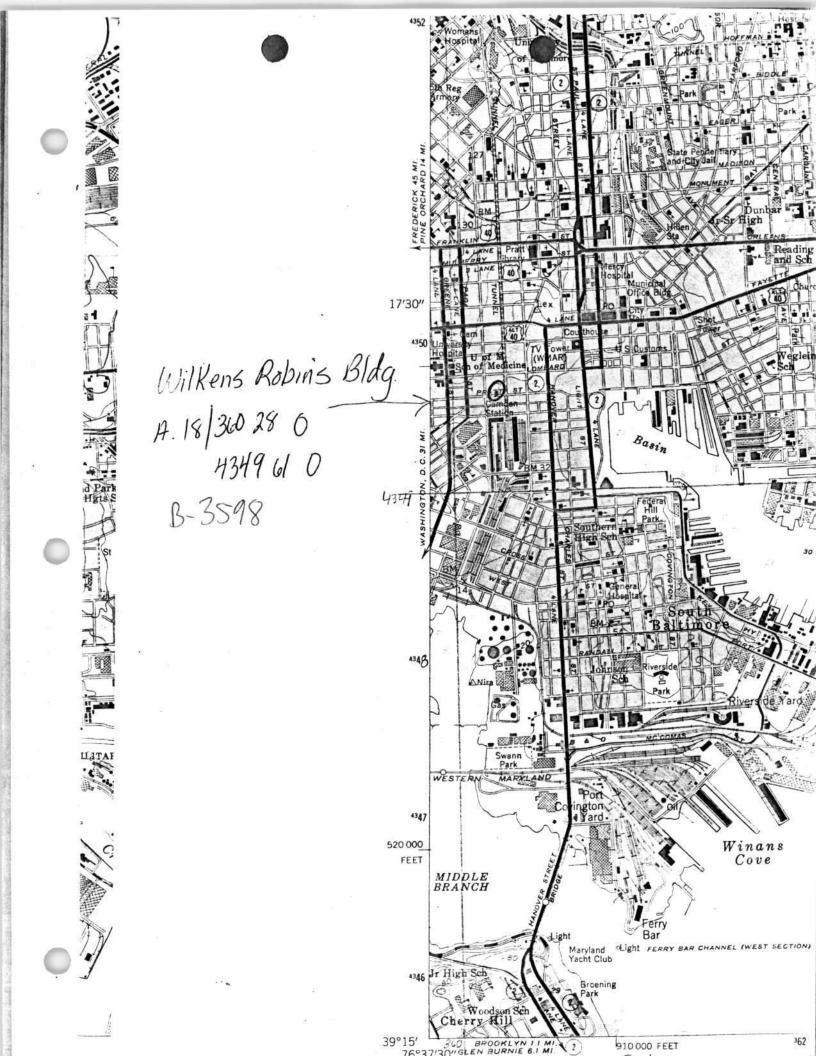
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B-3598

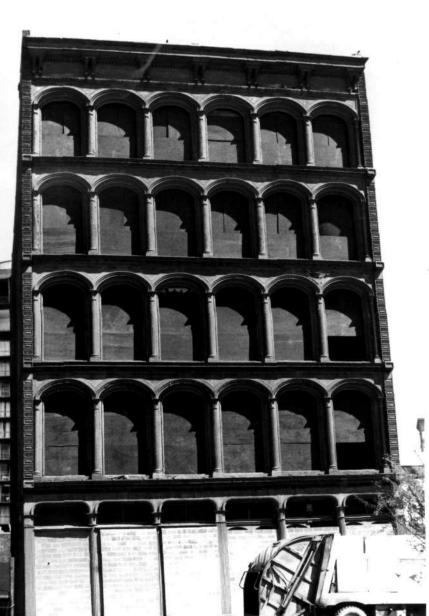
See Continuation Sheet #5

		8
10. Geographical D	ata	
Acreage of nominated property less to Quadrangle name Baltimore Eas UMT References		Quadrangle scale 1:24000
A Zone Easting Northing	B _ Z	one Easting Northing
E	F H	
west of Howard Street runni	north side of ng 50' east ald ence 110' south	West Pratt Street approximately ong West Pratt Street; thence, line to the point of beginning.  or county boundaries
state co	de county	code
state co	de county	code
name/title Dennis M. Zembala, organization Baltimore Industria street & number 217 E. Fayette	al Museum	date March 15, 1980 telephone (301) 396-1931
city or town Baltimore		state Maryland 21201
	Preservatio	n Officer Certification
665), I hereby nominate this property for incl	e local  n Officer for the National usion in the National Reg	
according to the criteria and procedures set  State Historic Preservation Officer signature	180 SEA	nservation and Recreation Service.
title STATE HISTORIC PRESER		date
For HCRS use only I hereby certify that this property is inc	cluded in the National Reg	
Keeper of the National Register		date
Attest:		date





WILKINS-ROBINS BUILDING B-3598
Baltimore, Maryland
Mark R. Edwards April, 1980
Negatives at Maryland Historical Trust
Southwest elevation of building
1 of 2



WILKINS-ROBINS BUILDING B-3598
Baltimore, Maryland
Negatives at Maryland Historical Trust
South (Pratt Street) facade of building
2 of 2

#### MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

MAG1#0423805511

#### INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

PALANCE				
1 NAME				
HISTORIC		= = =	1	i LA
Robins Paper C	Company Building			73
2 LOCATION	١			111
STREET & NUMBER 308-314 W. Pra	tt Street			
CITY, TOWN Baltimore		WOINITY OF	CONGRESSIONAL DISTRI	ст
STATE Maryland		VICINITY OF	COUNTY	
3 CLASSIFIC	CATION			
CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESI	ENT USE
DISTRICT	PUBLIC	_OCCUPIED	AGRICULTURE	MUSEUM
_BUILDING(S)	PRIVATE	UNOCCUPIED	<b>COMMERCIAL</b>	PARK
STRUCTURE	вотн	_WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDENCE
SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS
OBJECT	_IN PROCESS	YES: RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	_INDUSTRIAL	_TRANSPORTATION
		_NO	MILITARY	_OTHER:
4 OWNER O	FPROPERTY			
NAME			Telephone #:	
STREET & NUMBER				
CITY, TOWN		VICINITY OF	STATE , Z	ip code
5 LOCATION	OF LEGAL DESCR		Liber #:	
COURTHOUSE				
REGISTRY OF DEEDS,	ETC. Records Office, Roo	om 601	FOIIO #:	
STREET & NUMBER	Baltimore City Cou	rthouse		
CITY, TOWN	Baltimore		state Marylan	d 21202
6 REPRESEN	TATION IN EXIST	NG SURVEYS		
TITLE				
	nore Neighborhood Surve	у		
1976		FEDERAL	_STATE _COUNTY _LOCAL	
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS	COMMISSION FOR HIS	TORICAL &		
CITY, TOWN	1100111 900	ERVATION	STATE	
	26 South Calvert St			
	Baltimore, Md. 21202			
GREPRESEN  TITLE  City of Baltim  DATE 1976  DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS	Baltimore City Course Baltimore NTATION IN EXISTI More Neighborhood Surve COMMISSION FOR HIS ARCHITECTURAL PRES	NG SURVEYS  EY  FEDERAL  TORICAL &  ERVATION	Marylan statecounty **xLocal	

## 7 DESCRIPTION

B-3598

CONDITION

\_\_EXCELLENT

\_\_FAIR

\_DETERIORATED

\_UNEXPOSED

\_\_RUINS

CHECK ONE

ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE

\_MOVED DATE\_\_\_\_\_

#### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Five stories high and six bays wide, this building boasts the earliest remaining cast-iron front in Baltimore. Symmetrical fenestration, proportionally scaled, punctuates the facade, whichs is styled in the French neo-Greek manner. Light, stylized detached Ionic columns divide the round-headed, double hung windows with 4/4 lights.

The first floor has been altered by the addition of cinder blocks which obscure the facade. The upper stories are individually defined by simple cornice slabs, which underline the windows. Whimsical rectangular blocks, ornamented on unadorned, define the side building walls.

The projecting roof cornice with extended molding is supported by 7 brackets.

	47	Western Wilder Strands and Str	HITECT	
		INVENTION		
_1900-	_COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)
1800-1899	COMMERCE	_EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	_TRANSPORTATION
1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
1600-1699	ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	_SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
_1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
_1400-1499	_ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	_LAW	SCIENCE
PREHISTORIC	_ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	_COMMUNITY PLANNING	_LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
PERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	

the front is in excellent condition, with original windows and first floor intact despite the protective cinder block walls have been constructed at ground level.

### 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

	PHICAL DATA  DMINATED PROPERTY				
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1 . 4.					
VERBAL BOU	NDARY DESCRIPTION				Table of A
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				6	
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STATE	REPARED BY	COUNT	Υ	TATE OR COUNTY BO	DUNDARIES
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STATE  STATE  FORM PR NAME / TITLE	SEPARED BY Sistants COMMISSION FOR	COUNT COUNT	Υ	DATE March, 1976	DUNDARIES
STATE  STATE  FORM PR  NAME/TITLE  Planning As:	Sistants COMMISSION FOR	COUNT COUNT	Υ	DATE	DUNDARIES
STATE  STATE  FORM PR  NAME / TITLE  Planning As  ORGANIZATION	Sistants COMMISSION FOR	COUNT COUNT HISTORICAL & RESERVATION	Υ	March, 1976	DUNDARIES

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

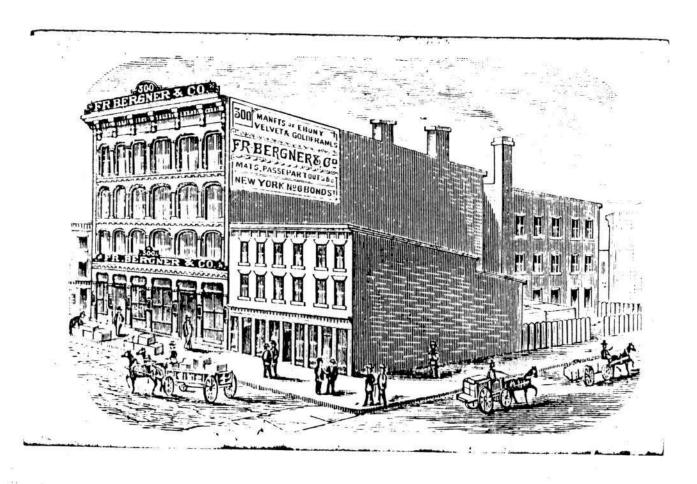
RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust

The Shaw House, 21 State Circle

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

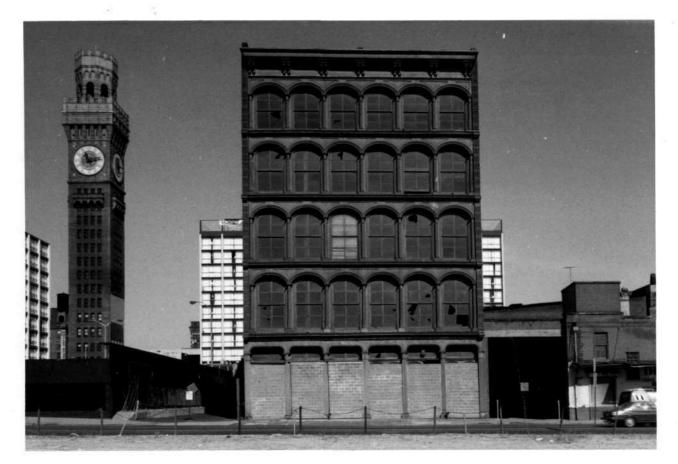
(301) 267-1438





William-Robins Bldy

8-3598



W. Prott

308-14

B-2380

B-3598

Neg # B. Penceh 2/76

Block 667



he.

B-3598 Wilken-Rollins Bldg

MARSH AND MCLENNAN BUILDING 300 WEST PRATT STREET RTKL ASSOCIATES, ARCHITECTS

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B-3598

Marsh & McLennan Building
Baltimore, Maryland
Architect: RTKL Associates Inc.
Developer: Stone and Associates, Inc.
Photo Credit: Scott MsDonald, Hedrich-Blessing